

Haiti 'Invasion' Leader Tells a Tale of Failure

By ORR KELLY
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A former Marine captain told today how he broke up a plan to invade Haiti and then use it as a base for operations against Cuba. He would have led the invasion.

In the process, he also broke up efforts by the Columbia Broadcasting System to film the invasion from beginning to end for use as a documentary.

The story was told by Napoleon Vilaboa, 29, a veteran of the Bay of Pigs invasion, by telephone from his home in Miami, Fla.

On Oct. 27, Vilaboa said, he was approached by the Rev. Jean Baptiste Georges, a Catholic priest and former minister of education in Haiti. Father Georges asked him to head the military phase of the operation, which had been planned for more than six months, he said.

Also involved, Vilaboa said, was Rolando Masferrer, a former Cuban senator and close associate of former dictator Fulgencio Baptista.

The plan, Vilaboa said, was to gather an invasion force of about 400 men, most of them Cuban exiles. Also included in the group were about 20 Haitians and an equal number of Americans.

There was some talk of U.S. support of the invasion—but no serious indication of it—Vilaboa said.

Vilaboa became increasingly concerned about the way the operation was going, he said.

He said he was especially worried because the group had poor equipment and its leaders had failed to come up with the promised boats and planes for the invasion.

Last Sunday morning, he said, he demanded written assurance that the necessary supplies would be made available—and that Haiti would be used as a base for operations against Cuba if the invasion were successful. He also insisted that if Mas-

ferrer went along, he would be a soldier serving under Vilaboa.

When he failed to get these assurances, Vilaboa said, he walked out.

The part CBS played in the operation was described by CBS News President Richard Salant by phone from his home in New York.

"We heard about this (plan) about five or six months ago and decided to try to cover it as a news story," Salant said.

CBS television crews filmed participants in their invasion preparations in both New York and Florida and a producer, Jay McMullan, was assigned to the story.

Vilaboa said he had heard that Father Georges had collected some \$350,000 to finance the invasion, but he did not see the money and did not know if the report was true.

Salant flatly denied that CBS had made any financial contribution to the organizers of the invasion.

"There was absolutely no money involved, no money at all, he said. "That would be against our policy. We were involved only as reporters."

Vilaboa said neither he nor the other Cubans involved was being paid. In fact, he said, many of the men bought their own uniforms and arms and about 60 men from the New York area quit their jobs and went to Miami at their own expense to take part in the operation.

Vilaboa told his troops in the Miami area not to quit their jobs and was deeply disturbed when someone else told the men from the New York area to go to Miami, he said.

The story of the proposed in-

vasion first surfaced Sunday, shortly after Vilaboa had walked out on Father Georges.

He said he believes Masferrer spread the word that an invasion had actually begun that day in order to keep the invasion force together.

Salant, however, had a different version of what happened Sunday.

The CBS reporter in Haiti, Bert Quint, picked up a rumor that an invasion had begun in the northern part of the island, Salant said. CBS broadcast the report, but then carried a denial when it could not be confirmed.

Since then, Salant said, Quint has reported that a very small operation did occur in Haiti on Sunday—what he described as "nibbling around the edges." But apparently this was not connected in any way with the Vilaboa-Georges operation.

While working on the story, Salant said, CBS newsmen heard reports of Central Intelligence Agency or Federal Bureau of Investigation involvement in the operation. But they were unable to confirm these reports, he said.

"We did become convinced," he said, "that various branches of the government knew about the planned operation."

Although the operation is now apparently at an end, Vilaboa still nurtures hopes for a successful return to Cuba.

Because his English is poor, Vilaboa spoke to The Star through his wife, Patricia.

When asked her husband's occupation, she said only that he is "a Cuban exile and revolutionary."

Asked how he makes a living, she replied: "I work."

Mrs. Vilaboa Napoleon
Cuba (Bay of Pigs)